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O B J E C T I O N S

A G A I N S T T H E

E S S A Y S

O N

Morality and Natural Religion

E X A M I N E D.

*Res falsa et inanis, nisi corrigatur, habet nonnunquam fidem ;
multique sunt homines iudicii parum firmi, qui nihil au-
diant legantve quod non credant, nisi refutatum sciant.*

Seneca.

E D I N B U R G H :

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O B J E C T I O N S

AGAINST THE

Essays on Morality and Natural Religion

E X A M I N E D.

FEW productions of late years have occasioned more speculation and controversy than these Essays. The matters there handled are indeed of great importance, and demand the utmost attention. With regard to morals, the author aspires at more correct principles than are exhibited by others. With regard to natural religion, he proposes only to throw additional light upon the means by which we acquire knowledge of the Deity. Whether his notions be in every particular just, is perhaps hard to determine. He takes the liberty to differ from those who go before him, and those who come after him ought to have the same liberty. The book, however, appears to be writ with a spirit of piety, and with great zeal for religion, as well as for morality. To think otherways, argues, I'm afraid, such want of charity, as no difference in opinion will justify. I am sorry, therefore, to observe, that our author has not altogether escaped unjust censure; which is extremely discouraging to those who have so much

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of public spirit as to wish to do good by their lucubrations. At the same time there is some pleasure in thinking, that such censure is not far spread; that it is relished by those only whose religious fears are great in proportion to the deficiency of their knowledge, and countenanced by few or none of sound judgement and true piety. That men should differ in opinion about many of the abstruse points which fill this book, is by no means surprising; but to a sound heart, and well-disposed mind, it must appear extremely surprising, that the author, whose aim is visibly good, should be arraigned as secretly an enemy to religion and virtue, not only in private conversation, but publicly and solemnly in an ecclesiastical court. To condemn any man upon far-fetched arguments and strained inferences, (for the charge amounts to no more), if it would be intolerable in a court of justice, is not justifiable any where else. In so critical a time for the sake of truth, I undertake the author's defence; and hope, in the course of this apology, to show, that his opinions are at least innocent, and perhaps orthodox. I undertake this task the more chearfully, in order to undeceive many well-meaning persons, who have formed a hasty judgement without much attention, or perhaps altogether at second hand. As for any who, making a public profession of charity, wallow in the grossest transgressions of it; such I neglect, as incorrigible; and I trust that the author, for his own peace of mind, does the same; not stooping to cast a single glance upon such a man, if such a man there be; nor upon his writings, if rancour

our has incited him to publish his shame in print. Yet even with this man I would chuse to deal charitably, wishing heartily his reformation, and that he be delivered from a sore and bitter disease, that of a turbulent and contentious spirit.

The charge against this author, so far as I have been able to gather in conversation, or have been informed of, may, I think, be reduced into four articles. 1. That men are not in reality free agents. 2. That God deceives them with a fallacious sense of liberty. 3. That virtue is wholly founded on this fallacious sense of liberty. And, 4. That they cannot really sin against God. These shall be considered in their order, after adjusting one or two preliminaries. When we inquire into the scope and meaning of any book, an attempt to gather the same from a few mangled or detached passages, is unfair. The whole strain of the work ought to be taken under consideration; and one passage which admits of a double meaning, ought to be explained by others which are clear and precise. To this concession every writer is intitled; for otherways the most orthodox compositions may be proved the most heretical. And the writer of the present apology may possibly have occasion to insist upon it for his own sake, as well as for the sake of the author whose cause he espouses. Another preliminary he is intitled to lay hold of, though possibly he may not have much occasion for it. In examining the orthodoxy of books, it is a fair rule, That consequences drawn from any proposition, are not to be imputed to an author farther than

he sees, and admits them. Be the consequence ever so clear in the apprehension of others, this rule must hold. The author may be accused of blindness, or it may be of stupidity; but no man can be censured for opinions, however wrong, which he disowns. It is scarce necessary to add, that there cannot be a more unjustifiable practice, than the loading any person with opinions which are not a fair consequence from what is maintained, but must be gathered by remote reasoning, and forced construction. When consequences thus drawn are not admitted by an author, he cannot be accused of blindness, nor even of the slightest defect in judgement.

These preliminaries being adjusted, I proceed to the charge. And with relation to the first article, no person of reading need be put in mind, that of all the controversies which have perplexed the learned world, that concerning liberty and necessity has ever been held the most abstruse and difficult. In all ages it has divided philosophers and divines; and at this day the division is as wide as ever. The Calvinist divines generally hold, that the will of man is necessarily determined by motives. The Arminians, all of them without exception, insist for liberty of indifference. In a dispute where we find many wise and good men of opposite sentiments, one would expect mutual forbearance and reserve; and that philosophers might be allowed to differ without being accused or traduced. Yet this is one of the points which by some is charged against our author, as arguing him of impiety. Could the charge of error be clearly made good, his plea
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for forgiveness would be of the strongest kind, as he would have the countenance of many writers, eminent not less for piety than sound judgement. But, after all, it may be doubted, whether he can be justly charged even with the slightest error. To make good such a charge, will be, I am positive, a very difficult task. To judge fairly, we must hear the author himself. Talking of the moral world, "Man (says he, *p.* 163.) is the actor here. He is endued with will, and he acts from choice. He has a power of beginning motion, which is subject to no mechanical laws; and therefore he is not under what is called physical necessity. He has appetites and passions, which prompt him to their respective gratifications; but he is under no necessity of blindly submitting to their impulse. For reason has a power of restraint. It suggests motives from the cool views of good and evil. He deliberates upon these. In consequence of his deliberation he chuses: and here, if any where, lies our liberty." Man therefore, according to our author, is free, as being a rational creature, under no physical or mechanical necessity, acting with understanding, deliberation, and choice.

In another respect he holds man to be a necessary agent, as the will or choice necessarily (*i. e.* unavoidably and certainly) follows the last judgement of the understanding, or is determined by the prevailing motive. This doctrine resolves into what the philosophers and divines call *moral necessity*. Thus, (*p.* 164.), "That motives have some influence in determining the mind, is certain;

tain; and that they have this influence in different degrees, is equally certain. The sense of honour and gratitude, for instance, are powerful motives to serve a friend. Let the man's private interest concur, and the motives become more powerful. Add the certain prospect of poverty, shame, or bodily suffering, if he shall act a different part, and you leave him no choice: the motives to action are rendered irresistible. Motives being once allowed to have a determining force in any degree, it is easy to suppose the force so augmented by accumulation of motives, as to leave little freedom to the mind, or rather none at all. In such instances there is no denying that we are under a necessity to act. And though this, to be sure, is not physical necessity, as arising not from the laws of matter, but from the constitution of the mind; yet the consequence is equally certain, fixed, and unavoidable, in the case of moral, as of physical necessity."

The meaning is clear. When a man acts after the freest and most deliberate choice, it is not less certain, that the action is the result of preponderating motives, than that the actions of matter are the result of pre-established laws. This is the sum of the author's doctrine concerning necessity; which, at the same time, he is at the utmost pains to distinguish from the necessity which results from constraint or mere force. One great source of confusion, (*p.* 173.), in reflecting upon this subject, seems to be, our not distinguishing betwixt necessity and constraint.

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“ In common language, these are used as equi-
 “ valent terms ; but they ought to be distin-
 “ guished when we treat of this subject. A per-
 “ son having a strong desire to escape, remains
 “ in prison because the doors are guarded. Find-
 “ ing his keepers gone, he makes his escape.
 “ His escape now is as necessary, *i. e.* as cer-
 “ tain and infallible a consequence of the circum-
 “ stances he finds himself in, as his confinement
 “ was before ; though in the one case there
 “ is constraint, in the other none. In this
 “ lies the liberty of our actions, in being free from
 “ constraint, and in acting according to our incli-
 “ nation and choice. But as this inclination and
 “ choice is unavoidably caused or occasioned by
 “ the prevailing motive ; in this lies the necessity
 “ of our actions, that in such circumstances it
 “ was impossible we could act otherways ;” that
 is, though endued with the physical power, yet
 that we are under a moral necessity of being de-
 termined by the strongest motive.

Having established the true notion of human
 liberty, as consisting in spontaneity, or in acting
 according to inclination and choice, the author
 proceeds to show what that liberty is which he
 rejects, and holds to be inconsistent with the ra-
 tional nature. According to his description it is
 plainly and clearly the Arminian liberty of indif-
 ference, or the power of acting against all mo-
 tives. For thus he expresses himself. “ A mo-
 “ tive (*p.* 175.) is an object so operating upon
 “ the mind, as to produce either desire or aver-
 “ sion. Now, liberty, as opposed to moral ne-
 “ cessity, must signify a power in the mind of
 “ acting

“ acting without or against motives; that is to
 “ say, a power of acting without any view, pur-
 “ pose, or design, and even of acting in contra-
 “ diction to our own desires and aversions, or to
 “ all our principles of action; which power,
 “ besides that no man was ever conscious of it,
 “ seems to be an absurdity altogether incon-
 “ sistent with a rational nature.” Again, *p.* 177.
 “ This arbitrary power being once supposed,
 “ may it not be exerted against good motives as
 “ well as bad ones? If it does us good by ac-
 “ cident, in restraining us from vice; may it not
 “ do us ill by accident, in restraining us from
 “ virtue? And so shall we not be thrown loose
 “ altogether? At this rate no man could be
 “ depended upon. Promises, oaths, vows, would
 “ be in vain; for nothing can ever bind or fix
 “ a man who is influenced by no motive. The
 “ distinction of characters would be at an end;
 “ for a person cannot have a character, who has
 “ no fixed or uniform principles of action. Nay,
 “ moral virtue itself, and all the force of law,
 “ rule, and obligation, would, upon this hypo-
 “ thesis, be nothing. For no creature can be the
 “ subject of rational or moral government, whose
 “ actions, by the constitution of its nature, are
 “ independent of motives, and whose will is ca-
 “ pricious and arbitrary. To exhort, to instruct,
 “ to promise, or to threaten, would be to no pur-
 “ pose. In short, such a creature, if such could ex-
 “ ist, would be a most bizarre and unaccountable
 “ being; a mere absurdity in nature, whose ex-
 “ istence could serve no end.—No reason have
 “ we therefore to regret, that we find the will
 “ necessarily

“ necessarily subjected to motives. The truth
 “ of this general position must coincide with our
 “ wish, unless we would rather have man to be
 “ a whimsical and ridiculous, than a rational
 “ and moral being.” Such is that liberty which
 our author rejects, as in his judgement inconsistent
 with the rational nature of man. Such the
 necessity for which he argues, *viz.* a moral ne-
 cessity which the will is under of following the
 last judgement of the understanding. Dr Clarke,
 the great patron of liberty, having said, that
 moral necessity, the result of motives, is no ne-
 cessity at all, but is consistent with the highest
 liberty; our author observes, (*p.* 172.), that
 “ if these words have any meaning, the dispute
 “ is at an end. For moral necessity being that
 “ sort of necessity which affects the mind, and
 “ physical necessity that which affects matter;
 “ it is plain, that, in all reasonings concerning
 “ human liberty, moral necessity, and no other,
 “ is meant to be established.”

But this is not the full view of our author's
 system. Had he rested here, we should have
 met with endless cavils. We should have been
 told, that here was manifest impiety, the Deity
 left out of the scheme, the blind fate of the
 Stoics established, a chain of causes and effects
 arising from nature, without reference to supreme
 intelligence or design. But the author's opinions
 are very different. He looks up to the Deity
 with reverence; and if all events in the natural
 and moral world are necessary, he ascribes this
 necessity ultimately to the counsel and decree of
 the Almighty. “ In the course of this reason-

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“ ing, (*p.* 180.), we have abstracted from all
 “ controversies about divine prescience and de-
 “ cree: though in fact, from what has been
 “ proved, it appears that the Divine Being de-
 “ crees all future events. For he who gave
 “ such a nature to his creatures, and placed
 “ them in such circumstances, that a certain
 “ train of actions behoved necessarily to follow;
 “ he, I say, who did so, and who must have fore-
 “ seen the consequences, did certainly resolve
 “ or decree, that events should fall out, and
 “ men should act as they do.” Again, *p.* 187.
 “ The Deity is the first cause of all things. He
 “ formed in his infinite mind the great plan or
 “ scheme upon which all things were to be go-
 “ verned; and put it in execution, by esta-
 “ blishing certain laws, both in the natural and
 “ moral world, which are fixed and immutable.
 “ By virtue of these laws all things proceed in
 “ a regular train of causes and effects, bringing
 “ about those events which are comprehended
 “ in the original plan, and admitting the possi-
 “ bility of none other.—Whoever has just
 “ ideas, and a true taste of philosophy, will see
 “ this to be the real theory of the universe; and
 “ that, upon any other theory, there can be no
 “ general order, no whole, no plan, no means
 “ nor end in its administration.” After these
 “ passages are considered, I presume it will no
 “ longer be objected to the author, That he hath
 “ gone about to establish the doctrine of blind fate.
 “ If any one shall persevere in the objection, I
 “ make the same answer for him which Calvin
 “ made for himself; for that great man did not
 “ escape

escape censure more than our author. "They
 " who would render this doctrine odious, re-
 " proach it as being the fate of the Stoics;
 " which was also objected to St Augustine.
 " But we do not, with the Stoics, invent a ne-
 " cessity arising from a perpetual train and series
 " of causes, founded solely in nature. We place
 " God at the head of all, as the supreme director
 " and governor. He from all eternity, accor-
 " ding to his infinite wisdom, decreed what he
 " was to bring about; and now puts his decrees
 " in execution by his power. Hence we affirm,
 " that by his providence, not the heavens, the
 " earth, and inanimate creatures only are go-
 " verned, but also the wills and designs of men,
 " in such a manner that they accomplish all the
 " purposes intended by him *." *Calvin. instit.*
theolog. l. 1. cap. 16. § 8.

The sum of our author's doctrine on this head is comprised in the following particulars. 1. That man is a rational creature, acting with understanding and choice. 2. That he is endued with a power of beginning motion, and is under no physical necessity. 3. That his liberty consists in acting voluntarily, spontaneously, or according to his inclination and choice. 4. That his will is

* Qui huic doctrinae invidiam facere volunt, calumniantur esse Stoicorum dogma de fato; quod et Augustino aliquando exprobratum fuit.—Nos non cum Stoicis necessitatem comminiscimur ex perpetuo causarum nexu, et implicita quadam serie, quae in natura continetur. Sed Deum constituimus arbitrum ac moderatorem omnium; qui pro sua sapientia ab ultima aeternitate decrevit quod facturus esset, et nunc sua potentia quod decrevit, exequitur. Unde ejus providentia non caelum modo ac terram; et creaturas inanimatas, sed hominum etiam consilia et voluntates gubernari sic asserimus, ut ad destinatum ab eo scopum recte ferantur.

necessarily; that is, infallibly and certainly, determined by motives; or, in the style of the schools, *voluntas necessario sequitur ultimum judicium intellectus practici*. 5. That, consequently, liberty of indifference, or an arbitrary power of acting, without or against motives, is no part of human nature. 6. That though human actions proceed in a fixed train, this is owing to no blind fate, but to the predestination or decree of God, who is the first cause of all things.

Concerning these points philosophers and divines may differ in opinion, and each side may, and will impute error to the other; but that, by any of the church of Scotland, such opinions should be censured as unsound or heterodox, shows great ignorance, when they are espoused by our first great reformers, and inculcated in all the most noted systems of theology, composed by Calvinist divines, and taught in our universities. With us it is a fundamental principle, That God from all eternity hath foreordained whatever comes to pass; that all events are immutably and necessarily fixed by the decree of God, and cannot happen in any other way than he hath pre-determined. But the most orthodox divines agree with our author, not only in his doctrine of necessity, as founded on the decree of God; but likewise in his account of that rational or moral necessity, which is effectuated by the operation of motives on the will. They hold with him, that liberty is opposed, not to necessity, but to constraint; that it consists, not in indifference, but in spontaneity, or *lubentia rationalis*; and that the will necessarily follows the last judgement of the
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the understanding. They shew, that none of the consequences follow, which are endeavoured to be laid upon our author; but that virtue and vice, rewards and punishments, are consistent with a necessity of this sort. Thus, for instance, the great Calvin reasons in the following manner. " Seeing we have often mentioned the distinction betwixt *necessity* and *constraint*, upon which this whole controversy turns, we must now explain it a little more accurately. They who defend free will, in opposition to divine grace, maintain, that there can be neither virtue nor vice where there is necessity. We answer, That God is necessarily good; and that his goodness, though necessary, is not upon that account the less worthy of praise. Again, that the devil is necessarily wicked; and yet his wickedness is not the less criminal. Nor is this any invention of ours; for in the same manner St Augustine and St Bernard reason, — Our adversaries insist, that what is *voluntary* cannot at the same time be *necessary*. We shew them, that both these qualities are found in the goodness of God. They pretend it to be absurd, that men should be blamed for actions they must unavoidably perform. By the instance above given we show, that there is in this no absurdity. — They object again, That unless virtue and vice proceed from a free choice, according to their sense of freedom, there can be no reason either for inflicting punishments, or bestowing rewards. As to punishments, I answer, That they are justly inflicted on those who commit evil; because it

— makes

“ makes no difference, whether their choice was
 “ free, *i. e.* arbitrary, or whether they were un-
 “ der the influence of bad motives ; provided on-
 “ ly they were *voluntary* in their guilt.—As
 “ to rewards, there is certainly no absurdity in
 “ our saying, that these are bestowed rather ac-
 “ cording to the goodness of God, than the me-
 “ rit of men*.” *Calvin. tractat. theolog. p. 152.*
edit. Amstelod. 1667.

The learned Francis Turretine, Professor in Geneva, whose authority as an orthodox divine will be allowed to be of the greatest weight, examines this question fully in his *Institut. Theolog.* under the head *de libero arbitrio*, vol. 1. p. 728. to 737. and maintains the same doctrine with our author. He represents it as the capital and fundamental heresy of the Pelagians and Armi-

* Quoniam autem ejus distinctionis sapius jam meminimus quam nos inter *coactionem* et *necessitatem* statuimus, unde pendet majore ex parte hæc questio, eamque non nisi obiter attigimus, paulo diligentius nunc exequenda nobis est. Negant ergo qui liberum arbitrium contra Dei gratiam tuentur, peccatum aut virtutem esse, ubi est necessitas. Respondemus, Deum necessario bonum esse; nihilo tamen minorem ex bonitate laudem consequi, quia non nisi bonus esse possit. Rursus diabolus necessario malum esse, nihilo tamen minus viciosam esse ejus malitiam. Neque id nostrum commentum; sic ante nos Augustinus, sic Bernardus locuti sunt.—*Voluntarium* cum *necessario* minime convenire extorquere volunt adversarii. Nos autem utrumque simul congruere in Dei bonitate ostendimus. Absurdum esse dicunt, ut vitio aut culpæ dentur hominibus, quæ sic faciunt ut aliter nequeant. Nos, adducta similitudine, absurditatem hanc diluimus.—Objiciunt, 2do, Nisi ex liberi arbitrii electione tum virtutes, tum vitia procedant, non esse consentaneum, ut homini vel infligatur poena, vel præmium rependatur. De poenis respondeo, fore nobis irrogari a quibus culpa emanet; neque referre, liberone judicio, an servili modo *voluntaria* cupiditate, peccemus.—De præmiis respondeo, nihil absurdi esse, si ex Dei benignitate potius, quam propriis hominum meritis dependeant.

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nians, that they hold liberty to consist in indifference, not in spontaneity; and that they maintain every kind of necessity to be inconsistent with liberty. With great accuracy and strength of reason, he considers the several kinds of necessity. He shews, that two of them, coercion, and physical necessity, arising from the laws of matter, are destructive of liberty. But that rational or moral necessity, which arises from the constitution of the mind, as necessarily determined by motives, and the necessity which arises from the divine decree, are perfectly consistent with liberty in its orthodox sense. He removes the objection against this doctrine, of its making man a mere machine; and, much in the same way with our author, shows, that upon the Arminian liberty of indifference, or an arbitrary power of counteracting all motives, man would be a most irrational and unaccountable being, to whom argument and reasoning, precept and command, would be addressed in vain. The following are his words, (*p.* 566. *v.* 1.) “ There
 “ are only two kinds of necessity which are in-
 “ consistent with liberty; physical necessity, and
 “ the necessity of constraint. The other kinds
 “ of necessity, which arise either from the de-
 “ cree or influence of God, or from the object
 “ itself, and the last judgement of the under-
 “ standing, are so far from overthrowing liberty,
 “ that they rather establish it; because they do
 “ not constrain the will, but persuade it; and
 “ produce a voluntary choice in one that was be-
 “ fore unwilling. For whatever a man does ac-
 “ cording to his inclination, with judgement
 “ and

“ and understanding, and with the full consent
 “ of his will, it is impossible but he must do
 “ freely, although, in another sense, he does it
 “ necessarily. This holds, from whatever quar-
 “ ter we suppose the necessity laid upon him to
 “ arise; whether it be from the existence of the
 “ thing itself, or from the motive effectually de-
 “ termining his will, or from the decree and
 “ concurrence of the first cause *.”

Benedict Pictet, Turretine's successor in the
 chair of Geneva, and acknowledged in the uni-
 versities of this country as an author of the sound-
 est principles, establishes the same doctrine in so
 clear a manner, as that words cannot be more
 precise and express. “ Before we discourse of
 “ free will, we must explain the meaning of the
 “ term. By free will we understand nothing
 “ else, but a power of doing what we please,
 “ with judgement and understanding, without
 “ any external compulsion. To this free will
 “ two things are opposed. First, physical or
 “ natural necessity; such as we see in inanimate
 “ beings; for instance, the necessity by which
 “ fire burns. Next, the necessity of constraint;
 “ which arises from external violence, imposed

* *Dux istæ tantum sunt necessitatis species, quæ libertatem per-
 imunt, necessitas naturalis et coactionis. Ceteræ, quæ oriuntur vel
 a decreto Dei, et causæ primæ motione, vel ab objecto, et judi-
 cio ultimo intellectus practici, tantum abest ut libertatem evertant,
 ut eam magis tueantur; quia flectunt voluntatem, non cogunt, et
 faciunt ex nolente, volentem. Quisquis enim facit sponte quod vult
 ex rationis judicio, et pleno voluntatis consensu, id non potest non
 libere facere, etiamsi necessario faciat, undecumque fluat illa necessitas,
 sive ab ipsa rei existentia, quia quicquid est, quando est, necessario
 est; sive ab objecto inentem et voluntatem efficaciter movente, sive a cau-
 sa prima decernente et concurrente.*

“ against

“ against the inclination of him who suffers it ;
 “ as when a man is hurried to prison, or to an
 “ idol-temple. But we must not oppose to free
 “ will that necessity of dependence on God
 “ which all creatures lie under, and from which
 “ no rational being can be exempted ; nor that
 “ rational necessity which arises from the last
 “ judgement of the understanding ; as when I
 “ necessarily chuse that which appears to me
 “ best ; for my choice, though necessary, is
 “ notwithstanding free. Wherefore, all that is
 “ requisite to freedom is, that one should act
 “ spontaneously, and with understanding : which
 “ clearly follows from this, that God is the freest
 “ of all beings, and yet he is necessarily de-
 “ termined to good. The same holds of saints
 “ and angels. Liberty therefore does not consist
 “ in indifference : for if so, God would not be
 “ a free being ; and the more man was deter-
 “ mined to good, or the more perfect he was,
 “ the less liberty he would enjoy ; which is ab-
 “ surd. This is further confirmed by the fol-
 “ lowing reasoning. We all chuse what ap-
 “ pears to us our chief good or happiness with
 “ entire liberty : for who is not hearty and vo-
 “ luntary in such choice ? Yet to this choice we
 “ are determined by a strong and irresistible ne-
 “ cessity : for no man has any freedom of in-
 “ difference in this case. No man can wish
 “ himself miserable, or can chuse evil as such.
 “ Liberty therefore by no means consists in in-
 “ difference *.” *Theolog. Christ. l. 4. cap. 6. § 4.*

OF

* Antequam differamus de libero hominis arbitrio, prius viden-
 dum

Of the modern Calvinist writers who agree with our author, we shall only give one example, viz. the Reverend Mr Jonathan Edwards minister of Stockbridge in New England, in his late treatise, intituled, *A careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing notions of that freedom of will which is supposed to be essential to moral agency, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame.* Published at Boston 1754. The piety and orthodoxy of this author, it is presumed, none but Arminians will adventure to call in question. Among the list of subscribers to his book, there are many ministers of this church; and it was dispersed last year in this city by the

dum est quid intelligimus per liberum arbitrium. Nihil autem aliud intelligimus quam facultatem agendi quod lubet, præcurrente judicio et consilio, ita ut a nulla vi externa determinari nos sentiamus. Huic libertati opponitur tum necessitas physica et naturalis, quæ videtur in agentibus naturalibus, ad unum natura sua determinatis, ut necessitas ignis ad urendum: tum necessitas coactionis, quæ oritur ab agente externo; nihil conferente, imo renitente eo qui cogitur; ut si per vim adduceretur homo ad idolum vel in carcerem: sed non opponitur huic libertati, necessitas illa dependentiæ per quam omnes creaturæ dependent a Deo, a qua creatura rationalis eximi non potest; aut necessitas illa rationalis quæ oritur ex mentis nostræ judicio; v. g. quando necessario amplector quod mihi summum bonum videtur; nam etsi necessario illud præstem, non minus libere id fit. Ut aliquod ens igitur dicatur liberum, sufficit ut agat sponte et cum judicio; et hoc evidenter patet ex eo quod Deus sit ens liberrimum, et tamen necessario determinetur ad bonum. Idem dicitur de angelis et beatis. Libertas igitur non consistit in indifferentia. Nam si in mera indifferentia consisteret, Deus minime liber esset; et homo quo magis determinaretur ad bonum, id est, quo perfectior evaderet, eo minus liber foret; quod absurdum est. Illud confirmatur hac observatione, volumus omnes summum bonum et ultimum finem maxima cum libertate, quis enim ad illud sponte non feratur? et illud volumus cum judicio. At illud non fit sine magna et ineluctabili necessitate, nec ad id indifferenter nos habemus; cum nemo sit qui velit esse miser, aut qui velle malum sub ratione mali. Libertas igitur non consistit in indifferentia.

most zealous friends to religion and true Calvinism. As I have no acquaintance with this writer, I shall not take upon me to say what might be his intention in publishing this book so soon after the *Essays upon morality and natural religion*. But whether he had these *Essays* in view or not, it is certain, that nothing can be better calculated than this book to answer all the objections against our author's doctrine of moral necessity, to shew its consistency with reason and scripture, and the injustice of ascribing to it any bad tendency. To quote particular passages is unnecessary, for the whole book, from beginning to end, is one continued chain of argumentation in favour of this doctrine. He every where holds and maintains, "That the will is in every case necessarily determined by the strongest motives, and that this moral necessity (p. 24.) may be as absolute as natural necessity; that is, that a moral effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a naturally necessary effect is with its natural cause;" precisely similar to what our author, as above quoted, advances, (p. 164.), "That though moral and physical necessity relate to objects entirely different, yet the consequence is equally certain, fixed, and unavoidable, in the case of moral, as of physical necessity." For, says Mr Edwards, (p. 22.), "The difference between these two does not lie so much in the nature of the connection, as in the two terms connected." He rejects the notion of liberty as implying any *self-determining* power in the will, any *indifference or contingency*, p. 27.;

and shews in several chapters, p. 135.—192. that these notions of liberty which the Arminians hold, are so far from being necessary to accountability, to virtue or vice, to praise or blame, that, on the contrary, they are inconsistent with virtue, which must always suppose the determining power of motives.

He examines the passages of scripture which relate to this doctrine. He shews, that the acts of the will of the human soul of Christ were *necessarily holy*, yet virtuous, praise-worthy, and rewardable. He answers the objection to this doctrine of its making God the author of sin, exactly in the same way with our author, (*Essays*, p. 182.), by distinguishing between the intention of God and the intention of the sinner. Though no man, who either knows the character of this author, or peruses his book, can entertain the least doubt of his zeal for religion; yet it appears, that in New England, as well as elsewhere, persons of the worthiest character are liable to be calumniated and traduced. For Mr Edwards, when concluding his book, observes, (p. 285.), "Tis not unlikely that some who value themselves on the supposed rational principles of modern fashionable divinity, will have their indignation raised at the subject of this discourse, and will renew the usual exclamations about the *fate of the Heathens*, Hobbes's necessity, and making men mere machines; accumulating the terrible epithets of fatal, inevitable, irresistible, and it may be with the addition of horrid and blasphemous; and perhaps much skill may be used to set the things
" which

“ which have been said in colours which shall
 “ be shocking to the imagination, and moving
 “ to the passions of those who have either *too*
 “ *little capacity*, or too much *confidence* of the
 “ opinions they have imbibed, and contempt of
 “ the contrary, to try the matter by any serious
 “ and circumspect examination; or some parti-
 “ cular things may be picked out, which they
 “ think will sound harshest in the ears of the
 “ generality; and these may be glossed and de-
 “ scanted on with tart and contemptuous words,
 “ and from thence the whole treated with tri-
 “ umph and insult.” How unbecoming and in-
 decent such methods are, and how unlike the
 conduct of a fair and impartial inquirer after
 truth, the Reverend author fully shews; nor can
 I entertain any doubt that my readers will join
 with him in condemning such a spirit.

To relieve myself a little from the languid uni-
 formity of a continued defence, I will upon this
 single occasion change hands, and try my fortune
 in making an attack. Let us approach a little
 nearer to this liberty of indifference, which in
 late times has become so mighty a favourite, even
 with some who would be thought Calvinists, and
 let us examine whether it will stand a narrow
 inspection. I am not without hopes, that up-
 on a cool survey it will be found a favourite not
 worthy to be contended for. Liberty of indif-
 ference in chusing betwixt two things of equal
 importance, is abundantly palatable, and may
 pass without objection. But liberty of indiffer-
 ence is not confined to cases of this nature. It
 is asserted of man, that he has a power to will
 and

and act, without having any reason or motive whatever to influence his will. A thing still more extraordinary is asserted with equal assurance, that man has a power to will and act, not only without motives, but in direct contradiction to the strongest motives that can influence the mind. It might well be urged, that this doctrine is a bold attack upon the common sense of mankind; and not the less bold that it is taken for granted, without the least evidence, or so much as a single experiment to support it. Such a being there may possibly be as is described; but every man who has not a cause to defend, will bear witness that this is not his case. I venture to affirm, that when the proper questions are put to any plain man who is ignorant of the controversy, his answers to every one of them will be repugnant to liberty of indifference as above explained. But waving this consideration at present, my attack shall be made from a different quarter, by examining the consequences of such a power, supposing it, for argument's sake, to be inherent in man. In the essay upon liberty and necessity, it is inculcated at full length, that man endued with this power would be an absurd and unaccountable being. He could not be relied on. Oaths and engagements would be but brittle ties, and therefore he would be quite unqualified for the social life. I add, that this power which is imagined to exist in man, in order to bestow on him the greater self-command, has in reality the contrary effect. At the instant perhaps of willing or acting, it is easily conceived, that, upon this supposition, man must have a sway over himself,

himself, altogether arbitrary : but then he has no antecedent authority. He himself, even when the instant of execution approaches, cannot beforehand say what will be his determination, how he will chuse or how he will act. It is evident from the very nature of the thing, that even the Deity can have no foresight here, when, by the supposition, the man's will is altogether arbitrary, and is quite independent of all connections internal or external.

I make a second attack different from the former. I consider man as acting in the great theatre of the world, in which all things are governed by the providence of an almighty being. As it appears to me, the directing influence of providence is altogether excluded from human actions, by this supposed liberty of indifference. The operations of matter are governed by steady laws, and thereby contribute unerringly to the great designs of providence. But to what rule can the actions of men be subjected, which are supposed to be altogether arbitrary, and under no manner of controul ? They cannot be under the direction of the Deity ; for that supposition effectually annihilates the liberty of indifference. The influence of the Deity must be superior to all other motives in determining the will ; and consequently must have the effect to make man a necessary agent in the sense of moral necessity. Man, then, by this supposed power, is withdrawn from under the government of providence, and left at large to the most bizarre and most absurd course of action, independent of motives from good or evil, independent of reason, and independent

pendent of every view, purpose, or end. Here is chance clearly introduced in its most ugly form, so far as human actions can have an influence. This displays a dismal scene, sufficient to raise horror in every one who has feeling. After this, let not the Arminians cry out against blind fatality: a very uncomfortable doctrine to be sure. But is blind fatality worse than blind chance? Could I possibly be convinced of either, I should dread falling into despair, and being led to deny the being of a God.

But enough of this dismal scene. I proceed to follow out a thought occasionally thrown out above, *viz.* that liberty of indifference is an imaginary scheme, unsupported by any facts in human nature, and which no man was ever conscious of. This leads me to say and believe, that it never was embraced seriously in its true import by any man; not even by the most zealous Arminian. Those who espouse this doctrine, do certainly take up with words, neglecting to examine things as they truly are: for what man of plain sense ever imagined, that he can incline, that he can chuse, that he can resolve and will, without being prompted by any consideration, good or bad, and without having any end or purpose in view? When a man acts, it is expected that he can say, what moves him. If he can give no account, every one considers him as a changeling or madman. As a consequence from this, I venture further to say, that the doctrine of moral necessity is that which is universally embraced by men of plain sense, whose minds are not warped by the tenets of a sect.

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This doctrine, I say, is universally embraced; though not carried its utmost length, nor seen in its full extent, except, perhaps, by the studious and contemplative. With regard to acting, every man indeed conceives himself to be free; because he is conscious that he acts voluntarily, and according to his own choice. He is however at the same time conscious, that he has not the power of chusing or willing arbitrarily or indifferently. He is extremely sensible as to his inclinations, wishes, and desires, that these are not under his arbitrary power. And if this be once admitted, the chain of moral necessity is established. For no plain man, at the time of the action, entertains the least doubt, that his will is influenced by inclinations, wishes, and desires; which puts a final end to the liberty of indifference. I must except indeed, in this view of the matter, the after-thought, which, for wise and good purposes, suggests to every man, that he might have acted otherways. But this notion is confined entirely to the retrospect, and evidently has no place when we act, or when we think of a future action.

In the foregoing light to me appears unavoidably the celebrated doctrine of liberty of indifference: and when such is my case, I can as little avoid, after the coolest reflection, thinking that the author of the essays has done well in contributing his endeavour to banish the Arminian doctrine out of our church. It is my serious opinion, that to embrace it with all its necessary consequences, is in effect introducing into this world blind chance, confusion, and anarchy; which is the high road

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to Atheism. Far be it from my thoughts, at the same time, to accuse Arminians of Atheism, or of irreligion in any degree. I am sensible, that the Arminian doctrine has been and is espoused by many good and pious men. But this I must take the liberty to affirm, that these men stop short at the threshold, without pushing their way forward to behold the ugly appearances within doors. These appearances are now laid open to them. If the doctrine can be moulded into some new shape, to make it square with religion and morality, such improvement must be agreeable to every well-disposed mind, because of the comfort it must afford to those who adhere to liberty of indifference. But, without pretending to the gift of prophecy, I venture to foretel, that it will be extremely difficult to stop any where short of moral necessity; and that any solid reformation of the Arminian doctrine, will infallibly lead to the principles of Calvin, and the other reformers of our church.

I proceed to the second article, *viz.* That the author asserts, that God deceives man with a fallacious sense of liberty. In entering upon this article, it may be proper to remind the reader, that the purpose of the present inquiry is not to defend every position of the author as strictly just and true. This defence I leave to others, if any shall be disposed to undertake it. I confine my aim, to support the author's innocence and his upright intentions; and to show, that, whether he has erred or not, there is nothing in his book so contrary to religion and morals, as to render him criminal in publishing it.

I must, in the first place, observe, that the author no where says, that God deceives mankind. He uses indeed the expression, *deceitful feeling of liberty*. This may sound harsh; and the author himself apologizes for the expression, (p. 152.), as occasioned by the want of a more proper term. But let him be at least allowed the privilege of explaining his own terms. *Deceitful*, in the common acceptation, implies somewhat immoral. It is apt to convey the idea of hurt intended, of a bad design, or unlawful means. But our author most certainly has no such meaning, when he speaks of deceitful feelings in our nature: for his express definition of these feelings is, *feelings that do not strictly correspond to the philosophical truth of things*. "The impressions (says he, p. 152.) which man receives, and the notions he forms, are accurately adapted to the useful purposes of life, though they do not correspond in every instance to the philosophic truth of things. It was not intended that man should make profound discoveries. He is framed to be more an active than a contemplative being: and his views both of the natural and moral world are so adjusted, as to be made subservient to correctness of action, rather than of belief. Several instances there are of perceptions, which, for want of a more proper term, may be called *deceitful*, because they differ from the real truth." Let this definition be substituted in place of the phrase *deceitful feeling*, and there will no longer remain any ground of offence even to the most delicate taste.

To say that our senses do not always represent objects according to the strict philosophic truth, can be no heresy, because it is infallibly true. A straight rod appears crooked in the water; a square tower at a distance appears round. The vast globes of the sun and moon, appear to be plain surfaces. The same object at different distances appears to the eye small and great. The secondary qualities of bodies do not exist as we apprehend them. Sweetness, heat, colour, are erroneously perceived as qualities of external bodies or substances; for they exist not but in the mind of the percipient. In all these instances our perceptions are false or inaccurate representations of their objects. Attention being given to numberless instances of this sort, rash and arrogant would it be to argue, that if in any instance our perceptions deviate from philosophic truth, God must be an impostor, a deceiver. The shallowness, as well as impiety of this inference, must be charged upon the man himself who reasons thus; for the premisses are beyond the reach of dispute. Thus it happens, that, in furious zeal to run down an antagonist, the attacker frequently does nothing but bespatter himself. How shallow and weak this inference is, will evidently appear from considering, that our senses were intended, not merely for laying open to us things as they truly and really exist, but rather for giving us such information of things as is proper for the uses of life. This constitution, it is certain, contributes in many instances to our happiness. Colour and beauty, according to strict philosophic truth, have no existence but

but in the mind of the percipient, yet to us these appear to be qualities of external objects; and this mechanism makes the things by which we are surrounded appear delightful. Let it be but considered, that, in the law-pharse, there is a *dolus bonus*, as well as a *dolus malus*; and that the intention of mischief is that chiefly which qualifies deceit to be immoral. By the art of perspective painting, a plain surface appears raised, and an object near the eye appears at a great distance. We are deceived, it is true; but the deceit contributes to our entertainment. But, without going so far, it is evident beyond contradiction, that things are not always as they appear to our senses. And who is it that dare arraign the wisdom of God, or his truth, in making us so?

It was objected to the Copernican hypothesis, That it was contradicted by the scripture, which represents the earth as established and fixed in its place; the heavens stretched above as a curtain; the sun, moon, and stars, running their courses, and making a circuit from the one end of heaven to the other. What did the defenders of that hypothesis reply to the objection? Did they think themselves obliged to yield, either that a system supported by demonstration was not true, or that God was a false and deceitful being, for not representing things in his word as they really are? No: they said that the scripture was designed to inform us of the road to eternal happiness; and not to teach us a system of astronomy; and therefore, that it was no way inconsistent with the perfections of God, to use such language on these subjects, as was suited

suiited to popular apprehension, rather than to strict philosophy. Nor was their piety ever called in question on this account*.

To return to our author: It is his opinion, that our sense of moral liberty is one of those which do not accurately correspond with truth. He imagines, that though in fact we are necessarily determined by motives, yet, in reflecting upon past actions, that we are not conscious of this necessity; and that our nature is purposely so contrived, in order to serve the cause of virtue, and to give conscience the greater authority.

This is the explanation given by our author, of what, for want of a more proper name, he is reduced to call the deceitful or delusive feeling of liberty. To this it amounts, and to no more. Is it not strange, that upon so intricate a subject, which has divided mankind from the beginning, and which is involved in darkness and mystery, a speculative writer may not be permitted to throw out this hypothesis, without being represented as a gross blasphemer, and a wicked man? The Calvinists deny liberty of indifference: the Arminians maintain it. The author steps in as

* Vide pamphlet, intituled, *The philosophy of divine revelation, my argument of imposture*; where the foregoing point is fully considered. "It would be unworthy of the Supreme Being, (says that ingenious writer, p. 34.), to convey into our minds any wrong representations of things, merely for the sake of these representations themselves. But to convey such ideas and apprehensions, for the sake of some advantages of greater importance to us, is agreeable to all the notions we can form of wisdom and goodness. If therefore the disadvantages of these perceptions may admit of a compensation, and may possibly be balanced by something more beneficial to mankind, then we shall have a probable account of the divine conduct in this matter."

a reconciler. He agrees with the Calvinists in denying such liberty. He yields to the Arminians, that we have some sense of it; though this sense do not represent things as they really are. He assigns a final cause for this singularity in our nature; plausible at least, if not solid. Can any man, laying his hand on his heart, honestly say, that this is giving God the lie? And has such treatment the least mark of candour or humanity? especially after the author has taken so much pains to guard against this consequence in every part of the work, and particularly in the following passage. "It is universally allowed by
 " modern philosophers, that the perceptions of
 " our external senses are not always agreeable
 " to strict truth, but so contrived, as rather to
 " answer the purposes of use. Now, if it be
 " called a deceit in our senses, not to give us
 " just representations of the material world, the
 " Deity must be the author of this deceit, as
 " much as he is of that which prevails in our
 " moral ideas. But no just objection can lie a-
 " gainst the conduct of the Deity in either case.
 " Our senses, both internal and external, are gi-
 " ven us for different ends and purposes; some
 " to discover truth, others to make us happy and
 " virtuous. The senses which are appropriated
 " to the discovery of truth, unerringly answer
 " their end. So do the senses which are appro-
 " priated to virtue and happiness. And, in this
 " view, it is no material objection, That the same
 " sense does not answer both ends." (p. 212.)

I shall add but one word more upon this branch of the charge. To every unprejudiced person

person it must evidently appear, that what is charged against our author upon this branch, may, with equal reason, be charged against every one who holds, as to the secondary qualities of bodies, such as colour, beauty, heat, and cold, that our senses misrepresent these qualities as existing in bodies, when in reality they exist only in the mind of the percipient; which is now become the universal belief of every writer upon natural philosophy. The famous Dr Berkley Bishop of Cloyne, wrote a book, on purpose to show, that our belief of the existence of a material world is entirely an illusion. In this doctrine he arraigns our senses of the grossest deceit; and maintains boldly, that the men, houses, mountains, plains, and things we see, have no existence out of the mind, but are purely mental ideas. This doctrine may be treated as visionary; and even to laugh at it as ridiculous, would scarce be indecent. But to represent it as calculated to support impiety, would be unfair; because there is no just reason upon which to found such a presumption. In fact, the Bishop's character for piety and religion is indisputable.

We proceed to the third head, *viz.* "That
 " virtue is wholly founded on the deceitful feel-
 " ing of liberty." The short answer to this
 charge is, That it is a mistake, and that the article is not true. That he has not founded virtue wholly on this deceitful feeling, let his own words bear witness. "It will now be proper
 " (*p.* 207.) to answer some objections, which
 " may be urged against the doctrine we have ad-
 " vanced. One, which at first may seem of
 " considerable

“ considerable weight, is, That we found virtue
 “ altogether upon a deceitful feeling of liberty ;
 “ which, it maybe alledged, is neither a secure nor
 “ an honourable foundation. But, in the first
 “ place, I deny that we have founded it altogether
 “ upon a deceitful feeling. For, independent of
 “ the deceitful feeling of liberty, there is in the
 “ nature of man a firm foundation for virtue. He
 “ must be sensible, that virtue is essentially pre-
 “ ferable to vice ; that it is the just order, the
 “ perfection and happiness of his nature. For,
 “ supposing him only endued with the principle
 “ of self-love, this principle will lead him to dis-
 “ tinguish moral good from evil, so far as to
 “ give ground for loving the one, and hating the
 “ other : as he must needs see, that benevo-
 “ lence, justice, temperance, and the other vir-
 “ tues, are the necessary means of his happiness ;
 “ and that all vice and wickedness introduce
 “ disorder and misery. But man is endued with
 “ a social as well as a selfish principle, and has
 “ an immediate satisfaction and pleasure in the
 “ happiness of others, which is a further ground
 “ for distinguishing and loving virtue. All this,
 “ I say, takes place, laying aside the deceitful
 “ feeling of liberty, and supposing all our notions
 “ to be adjusted to the system of necessity. I
 “ add, that there is nothing in the above doc-
 “ trine, to exclude the perception of a certain
 “ beauty and excellency in virtue, according to
 “ Lord Shaftesbury, and the ancient philoso-
 “ phers, which may, for ought we know, ren-
 “ der it lovely and admirable to all rational be-
 “ ings. It appears to us, unquestionably, un-

“ der the form of intrinsic excellency, even when
 “ we think not of its tendency to our happiness.
 “ Ideas of moral obligation, of remorse, of me-
 “ rit, and all that is connected with this way of
 “ thinking, arise from what may be called a
 “ wise delusion in our nature concerning liberty :
 “ but as this affects only a certain modification
 “ of our ideas of virtue and vice, there is nothing
 “ in it to render the foundation of virtue ei-
 “ ther unsecure or dishonourable. Unsecure it
 “ does not render it, because, as now observed,
 “ virtue partly stands firm upon a separate foun-
 “ dation, independent of these feelings ; and e-
 “ ven where built upon these feelings, it is still
 “ built upon human nature.”

Nothing will be more obvious to one who reads
 with any degree of attention, not to talk of can-
 dour, than the author's meaning here, *viz.* that
 we are endued with a sense of liberty, in order
 to qualify us for acting our part in this life to
 greater advantage. He makes not this sense of
 liberty the foundation of virtue or accountableness ;
 but represents it as the foundation solely of
 certain notions auxiliary to virtue. Our present
 notion of obligation, remorse, and merit, or rather
 our present manner of conceiving these moral
 objects, is indeed, according to him, strictly
 connected with the sense of liberty. But then he
 observes, that this is no infirm foundation ; be-
 cause the sense of liberty, though it deviates from
 strict truth, is yet essential to our nature. He says
 further, that, independent of this sense of liber-
 ty, independent of all delusive feeling, there is a
 distinction betwixt virtue and vice in the nature
 of

of things, which all rational creatures perceive, and are conscious of. He holds, moreover, the authority of God to be another foundation of virtue. For he says, (*p.* 76.), "The moral sense is the voice of God within us, informing us of our duty." And, *p.* 63. "It is the voice of God within us, which commands our strictest obedience, just as much as when his will is declared by express revelation."

From the whole it is evident, that although our author has introduced his hypothesis of an artificial sense of liberty, in order to remove some objections against the Calvinistic scheme of predestination and moral necessity, and in order to account for certain feelings in human nature; yet, in his opinion, virtue rests by no means solely upon this foundation. Independent of this artificial sense of liberty, we are bound to virtue by the authority of our Maker, bound to it by its intrinsic excellency, bound to it as being "the just order, the perfection and happiness of our nature." Though we had no such sense, it would still be *well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked*, in every state of being both here and hereafter. Such are the author's genuine sentiments. Any consequences charged upon him inconsistent with such sentiments, he will certainly disavow and disclaim.

The fourth article charged, *viz.* That man cannot sin against God, is a consequence drawn from the delusive sense of liberty already handled, and from two passages in the Essays, which shall presently be explained. Never was any consequence more wildly drawn. So far from anni-

philating sin, the plain scope of a great part of the book is to prove, that man is under a law to be virtuous, a law which is supported by the strongest sanctions, a law which, in the scripture-phrafe, the author says, is *written in our hearts*, and which he maintains to be enforced by the authority of God. He every where speaks with detestation of guilt and wickedness; and most orthodoxly defines sin to consist (*p.* 182.) “ in the evil intention of him who commits it; “ in some wrong or depraved affection supposed “ to be in the sinner.”

Our author indeed holds, that human actions appear not to the Deity and to man in the same light. And can it be doubted, that the Being who in one view comprehends the universe, and traces human actions through all their relations and remotest consequences, must in many respects see things in a different light from that in which they appear to weak and short-sighted mortals? But as our author's doctrine on this point seems to be greatly misapprehended, it may be necessary to give some explication of it.

The author in that part of his work which furnishes the foregoing objection, *viz.* *p.* 366. 377. 394. is reasoning with great zeal in support of the goodness of the Deity. He is answering the objections that have been urged against it; the objection in particular which arises from permitting moral evil. So far his intention, at least, is good. His answer amounts to this, That even the evil actions of men are made subservient to the great and good designs of Providence; that there is nothing which does not possess some proper

per place in the plan of God, and nothing which in his sight is evil upon the whole. From these premisses he is far from deducing any such consequence, as that sin, guilt, or demerit, cannot be in this world, or that men are not justly punishable for their crimes. He rejects such opinions with abhorrence. He holds only, that the wicked actions which men voluntarily commit, are, by the wisdom of Providence, made subservient to higher ends, and that good is brought forth out of their evil. This serves to answer the objection drawn from the existence of moral evil, which objection alone the author had in view. But he does not acquit the sinner of his guilt. He says no such thing; nor can it be drawn by any just inference from the answer he makes to the objection. And to prevent the possibility of being misapprehended, he in another part says the direct contrary. In order to put sin in its proper light, he distinguishes betwixt the intention of God and that of the sinner; the moral quality of an action consisting entirely in the intention. "As to an objection (says he, p. 182.) "of making God the author of sin, which may "seem to arise from our system, it is rather "popular than philosophical. Sin, or moral "turpitude, lies in the evil intention of him "who commits it: it consists in some wrong or "depraved affection supposed to be in the sinner *. Now, the intention of the Deity is un-

* To obviate any cavil with respect to the word *supposed*, the sense is plainly this, that these wrong or depraved affections are, by *supposition*, in the sinner, or are admitted to be in the sinner.

"erringly

“ erringly good. The end proposed by him is
 “ order and general happiness; and there is the
 “ greatest reason to believe, that all events are so
 “ directed by him, as to work towards this end.”

When these principles of our author are understood, his expressions will clearly appear to have a safe and orthodox meaning. Thus, when he says, (*p.* 393.), “ As spots in the sun’s bright
 “ orb, so, in the universal plan, scattered evils
 “ are lost in the blaze of superabundant goodness;” it is plain he means no more than that the evils and disorders in the universe are few and small in comparison of the good that abounds in it. This is a sentiment so harmless, nay so just upon all religious principles, that one cannot help thinking it strange any exception should have been taken to it.

The passage, so far as I can learn, that has given the greatest offence, is in that religious address to the Deity which concludes the work. It is full of the warmest admiration of that wisdom and goodness which is so richly displayed in all the works of God; and the author gives vent to his admiration in a poetical and rapturous style. In a composition of this nature, no reader of candour will expect the same accuracy which is necessary when an author is in a calmer mood; and for this reason no reader of candour will pry for objections in this part of the work. Having smoothed the way by this apology, we shall take a view of the expression itself. “ Neither imperfection nor malice dwell with thee. Thou
 “ appointest as salutary what we lament as painful. What mortals term sin, thou pronouncest
 “ cest

"cest to be only error. For moral evil vanishes,
 "in some measure, from before thy more perfect
 "sight; and as at the beginning of days thou
 "sawest, so thou seest and pronoucest still, that
 "every thing thou hast made is good." The
 meaning of the passage is, that there is no evil
 in the world, either natural or moral, but what,
 in the conduct of Providence, shall in the issue
 tend to good. I perceive indeed an inaccuracy
 in the following expression, "What mortals
 "term sin, thou pronoucest to be only error:"
 and I presume the author will make no difficul-
 ty of acknowledging this; because, though in
 one sense it is true, *viz.* that God perceives the
 sins of men to proceed chiefly from the blindness
 of their understandings, yet in a strict sense it is
 not true, nor deducible from our author's doc-
 trine. He certainly did not mean to affirm, that
 sin is nothing else but error in the understand-
 ing: for, as observed above, he expressly defines
 sin "to lie in the evil intention of him who
 "commits it, in the wrong or depraved affec-
 "tion of the sinner;" and it is no more but fair
 dealing to explain one passage by another. As to
 another expression, that moral evil vanishes, in
 some measure, from before the more perfect sight
 of God; the qualifying phrase, *in some measure*,
 guards it sufficiently, and shows, that it is not to
 be literally or strictly understood. The author
 never meant to deny, that there is such a thing
 as moral evil, or that God sees it to be really
 what it is. The obvious sense is, that God di-
 rects all things to such excellent ends, and pro-
 duces so much good even out of moral evil, that
 in

in a certain sense it may be said to disappear; or, when considered as an objection to the divine benevolence, to be as nothing in the sight of God; as one thing very small or inconsiderable in respect of another, is commonly said to vanish in the comparison. In the same sense, the concluding expression, "of God's seeing and pronouncing that every thing he hath made is good," will be easily understood to signify no more, than that although men sin, yet their sins are so directed, as that upon the whole all is good.

These solutions to the objection concerning moral evil, appeared to the author to rise naturally out of the doctrine of predestination. For it must not be overlooked, that to this doctrine he rigidly adheres. His settled opinion is, that God is the first cause of all; and that he decrees all future events, or that all things are preordained by him. "Moral evil," he observes, (*p.* 182.), "cannot exist without being at least permitted by the Deity. And with regard to a first cause, permitting is the same with causing; since against his will nothing can possibly happen." It was therefore incumbent on him to show, how consistently with the permission and decree of God moral evil has any place in this world. He solves this difficulty, not, as has been falsely laid to his charge, by denying the fact. On the contrary, he expressly asserts, "that in the present system of things some moral disorders are included." His solution is, that God sees things in a different light from men; and makes our actions, good and bad, so contribute to his great designs, as that upon the whole

whole all shall tend to good. He at the same time disavows the consequence, that God is the author of sin; holding the sinner to be guilty on account of his evil intention, whilst the intention of the Deity is unerringly good.

These speculations are thrown out with no other view than to solve an objection against the goodness of the Deity. So far his intentions are laudable, supposing him even to have erred, or to have fallen short of a complete solution. It will at the same time be bold to say that he has erred, when, as shall be made presently appear, his doctrine upon this point is the same with that of the most eminent Calvinistic divines.

The constant doctrine of Calvin is, "That nothing befalls but by the will of God:" *Nihil fieri nisi Deo volente*. The distinction made betwixt the will and permission of God he treats with the greatest contempt: *Hoc nimis frivolum est effugium* *. In many places of his Institutions he reasons against this distinction as of no avail to remove any difficulties against predestination; particularly, *lib. 1. cap. 18. lib. 3. cap. 23. § 8.* "How (says he) can we affirm that God permiteth any thing, unless because he wills it to happen?" The difficulty then lands upon him with full force, that moral evil has place in the universe, not by the permission only, but by the decree of the Deity. In what manner does he remove this difficulty? Precisely as our author doth. He represents sinners as instruments in the hands of God, for good, righteous,

* Tractat. Theolog. p. 626.

and wise purposes. "I chearfully and freely
 "acquiesce in this opinion of Augustine, That
 "God, who created all things good, and fore-
 "saw that evil was to arise, knew that it would
 "better answer the purposes of his almighty
 "goodness, to bring good out of that evil, than
 "not to permit the existence of any evil *."
Tractat. Theolog. p. 613. The following passage
 is in point. "In our sinful actions we serve
 "the designs of the righteous destination or pur-
 "pose of God; because, according to his in-
 "finite wisdom, he knows how to make use of
 "sinful instruments for excellent ends. Ob-
 "serve how stupidly they reason, who conclude
 "that crimes ought to go unpunished, because
 "they are committed in consequence of the di-
 "vine decree. I yield them more, that thieves,
 "murderers, and other wicked men, are the
 "instruments which God uses for bringing a-
 "bout his counsels. And yet I refuse that this
 "in the least excuses their guilt †." *Institut.*
Theolog. lib. 1. cap. 17. § 5. His reason for
 holding, that the divine decree is no excuse

* Denique, in hac Augustini sententia non minus tranquille quam libenter acquiesco: Deum, qui creavit omnia bona valde, et mala ex bonis exoritura præscivit, et scivit magis ad suam omnipotentissimam bonitatem pertinere, etiam de malis benefacere, quam mala esse non finere.

† Atque hac ratione, male agendo, justæ ejus ordinationi servimus: quia, pro immensa suæ sapientiæ magnitudine, ad bene agendum malis instrumentis uti bene probeque novit. Ac vide, quam insulsa sit eorum argumentatio: impunita esse auctoribus suis scelera volunt, quia non nisi Dei dispensatione patrantur. Ego plus concedo, fures, et homicidas, et alios maleficos, divinæ esse providentiæ instrumenta, quibus Dominus ipse ad exequenda quæ apud se constituit judicia utitur. Atqui eorum malis ullam inde exculpationem deberi nego.

for

for guilt, is, that although sinners unknowingly fulfil the purposes of God, or, in our author's style, contribute to carry on the great and good designs of Providence; yet they have no such purpose in view, nor any other aim but to gratify their own lusts and passions.

Calvin was undoubtedly a pious, as well as a great man. He certainly had no intention to soften the atrocity of sin, or to apologize for sinners. Yet he did not escape reproaches more than our author. It was objected to him, as he himself informs us, That he maintained man could not sin against God; "That all the crimes of men were good and just in the sight of God; that men in sinning did the will of God; and that it was rather his work than theirs." To these accusations he writes a full answer, in his treatise, intituled, *Responsio ad calumnias cujusdam nebulonis*. The sum of his answer is the same which is given by our author, p. 182.; consisting in distinguishing betwixt the intention of God and that of the sinner. "The guilt of any action being estimated from the design of the actor, it is clear that God is not the author of sin. Theft or murder is sinful, because such acts imply a wicked purpose. God, who only employs such instruments, is to be considered in a higher view. The sum is this: The essence of sin lies in evil intention; God, by employing sinners to fulfil his righteous purposes, is so far from being involved in their guilt, that he wonderfully brings forth the light of his own glory

“ from their darkness *.” *Traët. Theolog. p. 639.*
It were easy to extract a great deal more from this author to the same purpose.

The famous Beza reasons precisely in the same manner. The following is one of his aphorisms in his treatise *De aeterna Dei prædestinatione*. “ Whatever God worketh is good, “ seeing from him who is infinitely good, no evil “ thing can proceed; but God bringeth all things “ to pass: all things therefore are good, so far “ as they are brought about by God. And the “ distinction betwixt good and evil hath only “ place in the instruments †.” *Traët. Theolog. p. 373.* Again, (*p. 389.*), “ For we do not say, “ that sin is not sin in the sight of God: but “ when we distinguish betwixt the work of God, “ and that of Satan and evil men, we say, that “ those works, with respect to God, who brought “ them about, are good and just, which, with “ respect to the evil instruments who act, are “ evil and unjust, and merit punishment ‡.”

* Quia vero maleficium a fine quo quisque tendit æstimatur, palam est Deum non esse peccati auctorem. Homines quum vel furtum vel homicidium perpetrant, ideo peccant quia fures sunt et homicidæ. In furto autem et homicidio sceleratum consilium. Deus, qui illorum malitia utitur, superiore in gradu locandus est. Hæc summa est, quum peccati causa sit in hominibus mala voluntas, Deum, recta sua judicia per eorum manus excerpendo, adeo culpa non involvi, ut mirabiliter lucem gloriæ suæ ex tenebris eliciat.

† Quicquid agit Deus bonum est, quum a summo bono nihil mali possit proficisci; omnia autem efficit: omnia igitur bona sunt quatenus a Deo efficiuntur. Et discrimen illud boni et mali in instrumentis duntaxat locum habet.

‡ Neque enim dicimus peccatum Deo peccatum non esse; sed quum inter Dei et Satanæ vel malorum opus distinguimus, hoc dicere solemus, Dei agentis respectu, bona et justa esse opera, quæ, si spectemus mala instrumenta, quatenus et ipsa agunt, mala et injusta sunt opera, ac proinde justis pœnis a Deo puniuntur.

And

And this doctrine Beza, as well as Calvin, found on many passages of scripture ; particularly, *Iſ. x. 5. 6. 7. 12. Acts ii. 23. and iv. 27. 28.*

John Knox, the great reformer of *Scotland*, published a treatise, intitled, *An answer to a great number of blasphemous cavillations, written by an Anabaptist, and adversary to God's eternal predestination* *. In this treatise he fully considers all the questions that relate to God's decreeing evil for wise and good ends ; vindicates the doctrine, and shows that this neither makes God the author of sin, nor frees the sinner from guilt. We shall quote a few passages. Such as peruse the book, will find the same strain through the whole. *Pag. 312.* " How one and the same
 " work, in so far as it proceedeth from God, is
 " most just, most profitable, and most merciful ;
 " and yet as it proceedeth from the instruments,
 " most profane, most wicked, damnable to
 " themselves, and most cruel, I have abundantly
 " declared, and after, as occasion shall be offered,
 " shall touch by God's grace." *Pag. 388.*
 " It is malice that will not suffer you to understand,
 " how that these evils which men willingly commit,
 " in so far as they come from God, are most just,
 " profitable, and good.—God's justice is rather
 " accused than maintained by the foolishness of your
 " curious brains, saying God permitteth many things
 " which he would not. What vanity is this ? Is it not
 " a thing confessed amongst all, that God's power is
 " omnipotent ? Who then can compel him to suffer that

* Printed by John Crispin, 1560;

" which

“ which he would not ? and why doth he wil-
 “ lingly suffer things which in his law he hath
 “ forbidden ? I answer, For the manifestation of
 “ his own glory, which is more precious than
 “ the heaven and the earth, and all the crea-
 “ tures in the same contained. And thus doth
 “ vanity cause you to fear, that God’s justice
 “ shall fall into decay, except it be underfet and
 “ upholden with your foolish distinction be-
 “ twixt his will and his permission. But we
 “ fear not to affirm, that he permitteth nothing
 “ which in some respect he will not : for as he
 “ is omnipotent, and a most loving father, so
 “ should he suffer no calamity to come, nor
 “ cruelty to be used against his children, except
 “ he did before see, yea and before determine
 “ their comfort and his glory to arise of the
 “ same. And will you say, that God’s glory,
 “ the comfort and preservation of his church, is
 “ an evil work, because that wicked men are in-
 “ struments, by whom God’s eternal counsel is
 “ brought to pass ?”——*Pag. 309.* “ We do
 “ not teach, that wickedness pleaseth God, in so
 “ far as it is wickedness : neither yet that God
 “ wills sinful acts to be done, in so far as they
 “ are sinful, without any other further respect.
 “ But we say, that as the actions and cogitations
 “ of the godly please God in Christ Jesus, be-
 “ cause they are wrought and inspired by the
 “ power of his Holy Spirit ; so that the good
 “ works, as patience, justice, chastity, and such
 “ like, God willeth to be done, even because
 “ the works be good, and agreeable to his own
 “ nature ; so say we, that God willeth, yea and
 “ hath

" hath determined the works that be most wick-
 " ed to be done, for the purposes and causes
 " concluded in his eternal counsel."—*Pag.* 129.
 " But yet ye cry, Wherein then doth man of-
 " fend? who can resist the will of God? why
 " doth he (God) complain, seeing that his
 " counsel and purpose by such means is brought
 " to pass?—I will, even in one or two words,
 " dictate why the creatures offend, even when
 " they serve most effectually to God's purpose;
 " to wit, because that they neither have the
 " glory of God in their actions before their eyes,
 " neither yet mind they to serve or obey God's
 " purpose and will."

We shall mention the sentiments of but one
 other celebrated divine on this head, *viz.* Mr
 Samuel Rutherford professor of divinity in St
 Andrew's. In his book *De providentia divina*,
 printed at Edinburgh 1649, he expressly holds
 and maintains, that the sins of men, though evil
 in themselves, yet are so ordered by providence,
 as to tend to the good of the whole. His words
 are, (*p.* 356.), " Whatever contributes any thing
 " to the fulness, the adjustment and splendor of
 " the universe, God willed that thing to come
 " to pass, by his permission; but sin does con-
 " tribute something to the fulness, the adjust-
 " ment and splendor of the universe: therefore
 " God did will that sin should come to pass by
 " his permission.—If there were no sin, many
 " things would be wanting in the world, which
 " are both of great advantage and great orna-
 " ment to it," (the things he means, are the
 discoveries of the divine justice, mercy, and
 power,

power, in the gospel): "and though sin be
 "evil as to the sinner, yet it is good as to the
 "universe*." And (p. 502.) he at full length
 defends the following position, "That sin, by
 "God who decrees, is accounted or held good."
*Peccatum apud Deum decernentem habere rationem
 boni.* At the same time, that his meaning may
 not be misunderstood, we must observe, that,
 with all orthodox writers, he ever asserts, that
 God by no means approves of sin as such; but,
 on the contrary, hates and condemns it; though,
 in the system of the universe, it is by his decree
 made to minister to good purposes.

From these passages it evidently appears, that
 our author's train of reasoning is justified by the
 most eminent divines who have followed the sys-
 tem of predestination; and that he insists upon
 the same principle with them, viz. That seeing
 God decrees all things, all things must be good
 upon the whole; that even the sins of men are
 made to fulfil excellent purposes in the plan of
 providence; therefore that the Deity must, in this
 respect, view moral evil in a different light from
 what men view it; and that this no way ab-
 solves the sinner from guilt, seeing he perpetrates
 out of an evil intention what is made salutary
 by God.

If a popular objection shall here be urged, That

* Quicquid aliquid confert ad plenitudinem, ornatum, et splen-
 dorem universi, id Deus voluit ut existeret, se permittente; sed
 peccatum confert aliquid ad plenitudinem, ornatum, et splendorem
 universi: ergo, &c.—Si deesset peccatum, multa mundo dees-
 sent, quæ ei non mediocri et emolumento et ornamento sunt. Et
 quumvis peccatum sit malum peccanti, est tamen bonum universo.

this

this doctrine lands in imputing to the Deity the doing of evil that good may come, and may be applied to justify the Jesuitical maxim, That the end sanctifies the means; I chuse to be indebted for the answer to the Reverend Mr Edwards.

“ If any objector should say, All that these things
 “ amount to is, that God may do evil that good
 “ may come; which is justly esteemed immo-
 “ ral and sinful in men, and therefore may be
 “ justly esteemed inconsistent with the perfec-
 “ tions of God; I answer, That for God to dis-
 “ pose and permit evil in the manner that has
 “ been spoken of, is not to do evil that good
 “ may come; for it is not to do evil at all. In
 “ order to a thing’s being morally evil, there
 “ must be one of these things belonging to it:
 “ either it must be a thing unfit and unsuitable
 “ in its own nature; or it must have a bad ten-
 “ dency; or it must proceed from an evil dispo-
 “ sition, and be done for an evil end. But neither
 “ of these things can be attributed to God’s or-
 “ dering and permitting such events as the immo-
 “ ral acts of creatures for good ends.” *Edwards’s*
careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing
notion of freedom of will, p. 266. The reader that
 desires to be fully instructed in this controversy,
 may consult this very acute and pious writer.
 He will find, in *sect. 9. part 4.* a full justifica-
 tion, both from reason and scripture, of the doc-
 trine above maintained; and will see it clear-
 ly proved, that once admitting the doctrine of
 divine decrees, it follows there can be no such
 thing as *absolute* evil in the universe.

That some of the expressions quoted from the
 G foregoing

foregoing eminent divines may appear harsh, perhaps as much so as any used by our author, I shall not go about to deny. Upon a subject which requires the utmost stretch of understanding, it is extremely difficult in any language to find proper words that clearly express one's meaning, and are preventive of all mistakes. Such words as language can afford, must be used, even though sometimes too weak, sometimes too strong. A candid and intelligent reader will do the best he can to gain the sense, without criticising upon the words, when he is sensible that it is less the fault of the writer, than of the tongue in which he writes. This, among all cool thinkers, will be reckoned a sufficient apology for the divines above cited, and likewise for our author. The points above handled are abstruse, and liable to misconstruction; perhaps unfit to be the subject of controversy, and of popular disputation. But who is to blame? They only who, by raising a cry against this book, and by making it the subject of ecclesiastical dispute, bring such points into the eye of the public, and into the mouths of men not universally capable to judge soundly of them. Our author did not write with this view. His work, conceived in a philosophical style, was intended for men of study and contemplation. With them alone it probably would have rested, had not a rancorous spirit made it a handle for open calumny and legal defamation.

One other cavil I have occasionally heard, which at first it was my resolution to despise, as below the notice of any man of sense. But now that

that my hand is in, I am tempted to say a few words upon it. Our author has been represented as denying, that our knowledge of the Deity arises from reason; and as insisting, not only that reason affords us no demonstration of his existence, but also that the most noted arguments for his existence are inconclusive. This cavil, and a cavil it is at best, arises from so gross and palpable a misconstruction of the author's sentiments, that no excess of charity can admit the supposition of its being made innocently, or with good intention. The author is not accused of denying the being of God, or even of doubting it. He is not accused for saying or insinuating, that we have not full evidence and conviction of this great truth. Nothing of this nature can be laid to his charge. In a multitude of passages, and in one entire essay, he asserts, proves, defends, inculcates the existence and perfections of the Deity, in the strongest manner. No author ever wrote with more zeal on this head. He carries the point so high, as to assert, that no man can doubt of the existence of God, more than of his own existence. To what then does this charge amount? for the cloud is so thin, that it is apt to vanish out of sight. The author, it is certain, does no where exclude reason from entering into our conviction of the Deity, and of his attributes. He asserts indeed, that our conviction of the Deity depends chiefly upon a higher faculty than that of reason. And supposing, for argument's sake, he had failed in this high pretension; is there any candour in turning against him his good intentions, which he visibly

has, in endeavouring to place our knowledge of the Deity upon the most solid foundation?

But not to fight at long weapons, I proceed to a summary view of our author's way of thinking upon this subject. It appears to have been one chief view of his, to overturn the sceptical principles of another author. It is maintained by that author, That by no principle in human nature can we discover any real connection betwixt an effect and its cause. This doctrine appeared to our author as dangerous, because it tends to invalidate every argument for the being of God, drawn from the works of nature, as the effects of a designing cause. To this doctrine our author professedly writes an answer, in his essay *on the idea of power*, which is introductory to that of *our knowledge of the Deity*. However dangerous this doctrine appeared to him, charity restrained him from loading the writer with the consequences, as it might well be supposed, that these consequences did not occur to the writer. Our author therefore attacks the doctrine, not the person who vents it. He maintains, that though the connection betwixt cause and effect is not discoverable by reason, there is nevertheless a real connection, which every one intuitively perceives. Here plainly he takes reason in its proper sense, *sciz.* that faculty of the mind by which we infer one thing from another, by the intervention of intermediate propositions. It is not by any process of this kind, according to our author, that we discover the connection betwixt cause and effect. No intermediate steps are employed. Without

Without the least reasoning, we have a clear and intuitive perception of the following truths, That every effect implies a cause; and, That nothing can begin to exist, without a cause of its existence. As this conviction is not derived from reason properly so called, our author ascribes it to an internal sense or principle, which he asserts to be more authoritative in operating conviction, than the strictest demonstration is. Thus *p.* 275.

“ Sense and feeling afford me a conviction, that
 “ nothing begins to exist without a cause, though
 “ reason cannot afford me a demonstration of it.
 “ ———The conviction in this case is complete,
 “ and carries so much authority with it, as scarce
 “ to admit of a bare conception, that the thing can
 “ possibly be otherways. This subject, at the same
 “ time, affords a new instance of what we have
 “ had more than once occasion to observe. Fond
 “ of arguments drawn from the nature of things,
 “ we are too apt to apply such arguments with-
 “ out discretion; and to call that demonstration,
 “ which, at bottom, is nothing but a conviction
 “ from sense and feeling. Our perceptions,
 “ which work silently, and without effort, are
 “ apt to be overlooked; and we vainly imagine,
 “ we can demonstrate every proposition which
 “ we perceive to be true.” The author’s mean-
 “ ing is further illustrated by the following pas-
 “ sage, (*p.* 295.) “ Further, the perception we
 “ have of any object as an effect, includes in
 “ it the feeling of a cause proportioned to the
 “ effect. If the object be an effect properly ad-
 “ apted to some end, the perception of it neces-
 “ sarily

"sarily includes an intelligent designing cause.
 "If the effect be some good end brought about
 "by proper means, the perception necessarily
 "includes a designing and benevolent cause.
 "Nor is it in our power, by any sort of constraint,
 "to vary these feelings, or to give them a dif-
 "ferent modification from what they have by
 "nature. It may be in our power to conceive,
 "but it is not in our power to believe, that a fine
 "piece of painting, a well-wrote poem, or a
 "beautiful piece of architecture, can ever be the
 "effect of chance, or of blind fatality. The
 "supposition indeed, so far as we can discover,
 "does not involve any inconsistency in the na-
 "ture of things. It may be possible, for any
 "reason we have to the contrary, that a blind
 "and undesigning cause may be productive of
 "excellent effects. But our senses discover,
 "what reason does not, that every object which
 "appears beautiful as adapted to an end or pur-
 "pose, is the effect of a designing cause; and
 "that every object which appears beautiful as
 "fitted to a good end or purpose, is the effect
 "of a designing and benevolent cause. We are
 "so constituted, that we can entertain no doubt
 "of this, if we would. And, so far as we ga-
 "ther from experience, we are not deceived."

These principles our author, in his last essay,
 applies directly to prove the existence of the
 Deity. Nothing is more easy, than, by mangled
 quotations, and wrested meanings, to misrep-
 resent an author, as is done in the foregoing cavil.
 But I venture to say, that no man can honestly
 misapprehend

misapprehend the author's meaning, who will give the slightest attention to what he writes. It is clear as noon-day, that the dispute handled in the last essay is not, Whether we have such arguments for the existence and perfections of the Deity, as afford an irresistible conviction? Of the affirmative our author entertains not the smallest doubt; and these arguments he sets forth in a strong light. The only thing debated is, By what power of the mind are these arguments perceived? By what means do they work their conviction? Says our author, Not by means of reason properly so called; but by means of internal light, or an internal sense, which renders the connection betwixt benevolent effects, and a benevolent cause, self-evident. The dispute then is purely logical, and nothing else. The arguments are the same, the conviction the same. A man would not naturally imagine, that he was wounding the interest of religion in chusing a side here, especially where his favourite side seems to do the most honour to religion; which our author's system plainly does, by showing, that our conviction of the Deity arises from a principle of greater authority than even that of reason. We are not left, says he, to gather our knowledge of the Deity from inferences and conclusions deduced through intermediate steps, many or few. How unhappy would be the case of the vulgar and illiterate upon that supposition? The Deity has displayed himself to all men, by means of an internal sense, which is common to all men, the ignorant as well as the learned. We have

an intuitive perception of him, as we have of our own existence *.

At the same time, to prevent any suspicion as if he intended to exclude reason from this subject, our author, (p. 340.), speaking of reason, says, "The comparing things together, and directing our inferences from feeling and experience, are its proper province. In this way, reason gives its aid, to lead us to the knowledge of the Deity. It enlarges our views of final causes, and of the prevalence of wisdom and goodness." Again, (p. 387.), speaking of the Deity, "Reason, when applied to, gives us all its aid, both to confirm the certainty of his being, and to discover his perfections."

With respect to the arguments *a priori* for the being of God, the author is far from rejecting them as false. He only complains of them as obscure, not well proportioned to the capacities of the bulk of mankind; and thinks it difficult to show that they amount to full demonstration. But he can best explain himself. The following

* In this way of thinking our author is countenanced by the greatest divines. Calvin, in the 3d and 4th chapters of the first book of his Institutions, is full of sentiments to this purpose, "That our knowledge of the Deity is not drawn from the schools, or from reasonings; but that there is engraven in the hearts of all men a natural sense or feeling of God, which they have by an instinct common to all." *Quendam inesse humanæ menti, et quidem naturali instinctu, divinitatis sensum, extra controversiam ponimus. — Hoc quidem recte judicantibus semper constabit, insculptum mentibus humanis esse divinitatis sensum, qui deleri nunquam potest; imo et naturaliter ingentam esse omnibus hanc persuasionem, esse aliquem Deum, et penitus infixam esse quasi in ipsis medullis, &c. Unde colligimus non esse doctrinam quæ in scholis primum discenda sit; sed cujus sibi quisque ab utero magister est; et cujus neminem oblivisci, natura ipsa patitur.* L. 1. cap 3, § 1. 3.

are

are his words, (p. 318.). "In short, difficulties
 "press both ways. But these difficulties, when
 "examined, do not arise from any inconsistency
 "in our ideas. They are occasioned, merely,
 "by the limited capacity of the mind of
 "man. We cannot comprehend an eternity of
 "existence. It is too bulky an object. It e-
 "cludes our grasp. The mind is like the eye.
 "It cannot take in an object that is very great
 "or very little. This plainly is the source of
 "our difficulties, when we attempt speculations
 "so remote from common apprehension. Ab-
 "stract reasoning upon such a subject, must lead
 "into endless perplexities." In this doctrine,
 so far as I can apprehend, there is no heresy.
 Arguments *a posteriori* are those which are
 founded on the works of God, bearing in them
 evident marks of a designing and benevolent
 cause. On these our author rests the evidence of
 the being and attributes of the Deity. It has
 been insinuated, that our author treats these ar-
 guments as also defective. But this is a gross
 misrepresentation of his meaning: for the de-
 fect which our author complains of, lies not in
 the arguments themselves, which he holds to be
 entire and satisfactory, but in the manner of em-
 ploying them as commonly done. He com-
 plains only, that our knowledge of the most im-
 portant of all truths, is handled as the result of a
 process of reasoning, when in reality it is accord-
 ing to him a self-evident or intuitive perception.
 Thus, (p. 337.), "Many a proposition is ren-
 "dered obscure by much laboured argument;
 "for the truth of which we need but appeal to
 H "our

“ our own perceptions. Thus we are told, that
 “ the frame and order of the world, the wisdom
 “ and goodness displayed in every part of it, are
 “ an evident demonstration of the being of a
 “ God. I confess these things afford us full con-
 “ viction of his being. But, laying aside percep-
 “ tion and feeling, I should be utterly at a loss,
 “ by any sort of reasoning, to conclude the ex-
 “ istence of any one thing, from that of any o-
 “ ther thing,” &c.

A few passages from the book will be our au-
 thor's best defence on this head, and will show
 how unjust it is to suspect him of the least scepti-
 cism on a point, which a most serious conviction
 led him to defend against the scepticism of others.
 The first I shall copy is in the following words.
 “ There certainly cannot be a more discouraging
 “ thought to man, than that the world was form-
 “ ed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that
 “ all things are carried on by blind impulse. Up-
 “ on that supposition, he can have no security for
 “ his life, nor for his continuing to be a moral
 “ agent and an intelligent creature even for a
 “ moment. Things have been carried on with
 “ regularity and order; but chance may, in an
 “ instant, throw all things into the most horrid
 “ and dismal confusion. We can have no solid
 “ comfort in virtue, when it is a work of mere
 “ chance; nor can we justify our reliance upon
 “ the faith of others, when the nature of man
 “ rests upon so precarious a foundation. Every
 “ thing must appear gloomy, dismal, and dis-
 “ jointed, without a Deity to unite this world
 “ of beings into one beautiful and harmonious
 “ system.

“ system. These considerations, and many
 “ more that will occur upon the first reflection,
 “ afford a very strong conviction, if there be a
 “ wise and good Being who superintends the af-
 “ fairs of this world, that he will not conceal
 “ himself from his rational creatures. Can any
 “ thing be more desirable, or more substantially
 “ useful, than to know, that there is a Being
 “ from whom no secrets are hid, to whom our
 “ good works are acceptable, and even the good
 “ purposes of our hearts; and whose govern-
 “ ment, directed by wisdom and benevolence,
 “ ought to make us rest secure, that nothing
 “ does or will fall out, but according to good
 “ order? This sentiment rooted in the mind,
 “ is an antidote to all misfortune. Without it,
 “ life is at best but a confused and gloomy
 “ scene.” *p.* 320. 321. 322.

The next passage is in *p.* 327. “ Attend but
 “ to the anatomy of the meanest plant. So
 “ much of art and of curious mechanism is dis-
 “ covered in it, that it must be the production
 “ of some cause far surpassing the power and in-
 “ telligence of man. The scene opens more
 “ and more, when, passing from plants to ani-
 “ mals, we come to man, the most wonderful
 “ of all the works of nature: and when, at last,
 “ we take in, at one view, the natural and mo-
 “ ral world, full of harmony, order, and beau-
 “ ty, happily adjusted in all its parts to answer
 “ great and glorious purposes; there is in this
 “ grand production necessarily involved, the
 “ perception of a cause unbounded in power,
 “ intelligence, and goodness.”

I shall add but one passage more, (*p.* 339. 340. 341.), "To substitute feeling in place of
 " reason and demonstration, may seem to put
 " the evidence of the Deity upon too low a
 " footing. But human reason is not so mighty
 " an affair as philosophers vainly pretend. It
 " affords very little aid in making original discoveries. The comparing of things together,
 " and directing our inferences from feeling and
 " experience, are its proper province. In this
 " way reason gives its aid, to lead us to the knowledge of the Deity. It enlarges our views of
 " final causes, and of the prevalence of wisdom
 " and goodness. But the application of the argument from final causes to prove the existence of a Deity, and the force of our conclusion from beautiful and orderly effects to a designing cause, are not from reason, but from
 " an internal light, which shows things in their relation of cause and effect. These conclusions rest entirely upon sense and feeling; and
 " it is surprising that writers should overlook what is so natural and so obvious. But the
 " pride of man's heart makes him desire to extend his discoveries by dint of reasoning. For
 " reasoning is our own work. There is merit in acuteness and penetration; and we are better
 " pleased to assume merit to ourselves, than humbly to acknowledge, that to the most important discoveries we are directly led by the hand
 " of the Almighty."

We have now finished the examination of the several articles laid to our author's charge, omitting not one that appears to be in any degree plausible.

plausible. On the whole, here is a book with which no fault can be found with respect to revealed religion. There is not in any corner of it the slightest insinuation to the prejudice of revelation; nor indeed is such a thing pretended. Morality and natural religion are the subjects he undertakes; and it is evidently his design to establish both on the most solid foundations. He considered these subjects as of the utmost importance to every man; and he thought it his duty to judge of them by his own light, and not by that of others. Convinced by his inquiries that religion and morality have a firm establishment in human nature, and finding at the same time loose and sceptical opinions spreading, he flattered himself, that his lucubrations might be of some use in preventing the infection. If he has given offence to any pious or well-disposed person, he will reckon himself no doubt so far unlucky. And if it will tend to remove this offence, the world is assured on the part of the author, that of all things it was the furthest from his thoughts to urge or insinuate any argument detrimental to religion or morality. His intentions were undoubtedly good. In his reasonings errors may possibly be discovered; for what man can say that he is incapable of error? but surely there is no ground for arraigning a writer as ill-deserving, merely because he hath deserted the beaten track, and followed a new train of speculation. To labour for the public after such a requital, would require more disinterestedness than for ordinary falls to the share of man. The author,

thor, however, conscious of his innocence, dreads
no such requital from any who have capacity to
judge of his work, and candour to judge of it
fairly.

F I N I S.

